

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PGOV PINT PP

SUBJ: PNG NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

REF: PORT MORESBY 0199

1. TENTATIVE SCHEDULE FOR UPCOMING ELECTIONS FOR NATIONAL PARLIAMENT CITED REFTEL MAY BE DELAYED PERHAPS FOR AS MUCH AS THREE WEEKS SINCE ELECTION COMMISSION HAS BEEN UNABLE TO UPDATE ELECTION ROLLS IN CERTAIN PROVINCES. FINAL DECISION ON ELECTION SCHEDULE PROMISED BY 25 MARCH, AND POLLING IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS COULD START AS LATE AS 11 JUNE AND CONTINUE THROUGHOUT THE MONTH. FIRST MEETING OF NEW PARLIAMENT COULD BE DELAYED UNTIL EARLY AUGUST.

2. SINCE EARLY JANUARY THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS HAVE BECOME VERY MUCH THE CENTER STAGE IN PNG, POLITICISING MOST ACTIVITIES. NATIONAL CONVENTIONS WERE HELD BY THE PEOPLE'S PROGRESS PARTY AND UNITED PARTY IN FEBRUARY AND THE PANGU PARTY HELD A PROVINCIAL CONVENTION FOR MOROBE PROVINCE IN EARLY MARCH. THE RESIGNATION OF DR JOHN GUISE WAS VIEWED ALMOST

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SOLELY IN TERMS OF THE UPCOMING ELECTION BY MOST COMMENTATORS DESPITE ITS PERHAPS MORE PROFOUND IMPACT ON THE FUTURE OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERALSHIP IN PNG. PRE-ELECTION FRUSTRATIONS DISRUPTED PARLIAMENT FOR A WEEK IN FEBRUARY AND TEMPORARILY DELAYED THE PASSAGE OF THE PNG NATIONAL SEAS ACT AND OTHER IMPORTANT LEGISLATION.

3. SINCE JANUARY THE PLANNING ON THE PART OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES IS MORE VISIBLE, BUT DESPITE THIS WE DO NOT CONSIDER THAT ANYTHING HAS HAPPENED OF SIGNIFICANCE TO ALTER OUR VIEW THAT SOMARE MUST STILL BE CONSIDERED THE FAVORITE.

4. AS INDICATED REFTTEL, CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THIS ELECTION WILL DIFFER FROM THAT OF 1972. BECAUSE OF THE CHANGE IN THE ELECTORAL LAW STATING THAT THE CANDIDATE WITH THE MOST VOTES WINS (FIRST PAST-THE-POST) WHETHER ACHIEVING MAJORITY OR NOT, WE BELIEVE THIS ELECTION WILL BE FOUGHT MORE CLEARLY ALONG CLAN LINES IN SOME PROVINCES. IF FIRST-PAST-THE-POST COUNTING HAD BEEN USED IN THE 1972 ELECTION, HOWEVER 85 PERCENT OF THE CURRENT MP'S STILL WOULD HAVE WON. THE PRINCIPAL IMPACT OF THE NEW ELECTION RULES WILL BE TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CANDIDATES FOR EACH SEAT, WHICH WILL MAKE PREDICTIONS REGARDING MOST ELECTORATES DIFFICULT. THE ENTRY OF A RATHER LARGE NUMBER OF WELL-KNOWN AND CAPABLE PUBLIC SERVANTS INTO THE POLITICAL AREAN IS ANOTHER CHANGE.

5. INDIVIDUAL PARTIES APPEAR TO BE BETTER ORGANIZED THAN IN 1972 AND BETTER FINANCED.

A. PANGU PARTY: EARLIER IN THE YEAR THE EMBASSY RECEIVED INDICATIONS THAT THE PANGU GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION WAS BREAKING DOWN, AND HENCE PANGU WOULD NOT DO WELL IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS. THIS LINKAGE IS OPEN TO QUESTION BUT IT SHOULD BE NOTED FOR THOSE WHO SEE SUCH A LINK THAT PANGU'S ORGANIZATION HAS IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY SINCE JANUARY. A CENTRAL CAMPAIGN OFFICE HAS BEEN SET UP AND OFFICERS ASSIGNED TO ASSIST IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CAMPAIGN. PANGU PLANS TO HAVE AN 80,000 KINA CAMPAIGN BUDGET, SOME 50,000 KINA OF WHICH WILL BE OBTAINED FROM A BANK LOAN. RECENT FUNDRAISING FOR PANGU HAS BEEN BETTER THAN EXPECTED AND AT LEAST HALF OF THE 80,000 KINA, PERHAPS MORE IF FUND RAISING CONTINUES UNABATED, WILL GO TO LOCAL CANDIDATES TO USE AS THEY SEE BEST (THIS IN KEEPING WITH PANGU'S NEW-FOUND EMPHASIS ON DECENTRALIZATION). THE PARTY ALSO PLANS TO ALLOCATE SOME 12-15,000 KINA TO BE USED IN CAMPAIGN ADVERTISING. IT WILL ADVERTISE IN THE MEDIA, AND IS PRUCHASING CAR STICKERS AND PANGU T-SHIRTS FROM THE PHILIPPINES. THE PARTY PLANS TO CONTEST 70-75 ELECTORATES, BUT WILL HAVE MORE THAN ONE CANDIDATE IN SEVERAL ELECTORATES. THIS REPRESENTS A FRANK ADMISSION THAT CLAN LOYALTIES AND LOCAL ISSUES OVERRIDE PARTY LOYALTIES IN SOME AREAS AND ALSO INDICATES PANGU'S DIFFICULTY IN PREDICTING THE OUTCOME. LIKE ALL OF THE PARTIES PANGU BELIEVES IT WILL DO EXTREMELY WELL. IT ESTIMATES IT WILL CAPTURE 30 SEATS (OUR OWN ASSESSMENT IS 24). PANGU WORKS ON THE ASSUMPTION OF BEING IN A COALITION WITH THE PPP AND A NUMBER OF INDEPENDENTS. FATHER JOHN MOMIS, AS UNF TWO WEEKS AGO, REAFFIRMED HIS COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT PRIME

MINISTER SOMARE AND WILL ATTEMPT TO HAVE AT LEAST THREE
BOGAINVILLE MEMBERS DO SO. PRIME MINISTER SOMARE IS BELIEVED TO
HOLD A SAFE SEAT.

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B. PEOPLE'S PROGRESS PARTY: GENERALLY ASSESSED AS THE BEST-
ORGANIZED PARTY, PPP PROBABLY HAS SLIGHTLY MORE MONEY FOR THE
CAMPAIGN THAN ANY OTHER. IT HAS PURCHASED CASSETTE RECORDERS
AND BULLHORNS FOR EACH OF ITS CANDIDATES. FEW ARE CERTAIN THAT

ANY OF THESE ITEMS-ORGANIZATION, BULLHORNS OR CASSETTES-HAVE
RELEVANCE TO THE STYLE OF CAMPAIGN, PARTICULARLY IN RURAL AREAS.

PPP IS VERY CONFIDENT. FINANCE MINISTER CHAN WAS QUOTED RECENTLY
AS PREDICTING

PPP WOULD OBTAIN 23 SEATS (WHICH WE BELIEVE IS
QUITE POSSIBLE). AT THE INITIAL STAGES IN THE CAMPAIGN, THE KEY
IS UNDOUBTEDLY SELECTION OF THE CANDIDATES THEMSELVES, AND PPP
HAS ACQUIRED A NUMBER OF GLAMOUROUS CANDIDATES FROM THE PUBLIC
SERVICE. FINANCE MINISTER JULIUS CHAN IS BELIEVED TO HOLD
A RELATIVELY SAFE SEAT.

C. UNITED PARTY: THE UNITED PARTY EXPECTATIONS RE FORMING
THE NEXT GOVERNMENT SEEM TO HAVE BECOME UNREALISTIC. PARA 4
REFTEL INDICATED ONE POSSIBLE SCENARIO FOR THE UP-COMING ELECTIONS
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TO BE A UNITED PARTY COALITION WITH PAPUAN MEMBERS. THE KEY TO SUCH A SCENARIO WAS ENDORSEMENT BY PAPUA BESENA OR PAPUAN MOVEMENT OF OALA OALA-RARUA WHO WOULD LEAD PAPUANS INTO COALITION WITH UNITED PARTY. OALA OALA-RARUA WAS NOT ENDORSED BY PAPUA BESENA. PAPUA BESENA INTENDS TO CONTEST ELECTION UNDER ITS OWN COLORS RATHER THAN AS PAPUAN MOVEMENT. THIS LEAVES THE UNITED PARTY WITHOUT A CREDIBLE CANDIDATE FOR PRIME MINISTER. UNITED PARTY PROBABLY HAS LESS NEED FOR EFFECTIVE CENTRAL ORGANIZATION THAN DO THE OTHERS. IN LARGE AREAS OF THE HIGHLANDS, WHILE THERE WILL BE MANY CANDIDATES, A LARGE MAJORITY WILL END UP SUPPORTING UNITED PARTY AFTER THE ELECTION IN ANY CASE. UNITED PARTY HAS ALWAYS BEEN WELL FINANCED AND IS IN GOOD FINANCIAL SHAPE FOR THE NEXT ELECTION. THE UNITED PARTY COULD WIN ABOVE 30 SEATS AND WILL PROBABLY BE THE LARGEST PARTY IN PARLIAMENT.

D. COUNTRY PARTY: COUNTRY PARTY IS ESSENTIALLY A ONE-MAN SHOW LED BY SINAKE GIREGIRE (MEMBER FROM DAULO OPEN) AND ITS SUCCESS WILL DEPEND ON HOW WELL HE IS ABLE TO ATTRACT PEOPLE TO HIM. HE HAS OPENED HIS CAMPAIGN BY THROWING A LARGE MUMU IN THE EASTERN HIGHLANDS IN HONOR OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS FROM SEVERAL HIGHLANDS DISTRICTS. THIS VERY PERSONAL AND TRADITIONAL METHOD OF SOLICITING ASSISTANCE SHOULD NOT BE UNDERRATED. IT CAN BE A VERY EFFECTIVE MEANS OF OBTAINING VOTES IN THE HIGHLANDS, AND GIREGIRE COULD END UP WITH A BLOC OF SOME 5-10 SEATS UNDER THIS CONTROL.

E. PAPUA BESENA: APPUA BESENA HAS FIELDDED AN EXTREMELY STRONG TEAM OF CANDIDATES. IT HAS DECIDED TO CONTEST 30 SEATS IN THE PAPUAN AREA. THE SCENARIO CALLING FOR A DEAL WITH THE UNITED PARTY (SEE REFTTEL) HAS BEEN CANCELLED. IT WAS NEVER ENDORSED WITH THE EXECUTIVE OF THE PAPUA BESENA. AS A CONSEQUENCE, OALA OALA-RARUA WILL RUN AS AN INDEPENDENT OR UNITED PARTY CANDIDATE, WHIL PAPUA BESENA, WHICH IS FAIRLY WELL ORGANIZED, WILL RUN UNDE THE NAME OF PAPUA BESENA PARTY.

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6. COMMENT: WE ARE ABLE TO NOTE CERTAIN GENERAL TRENDS:
A) THERE ARE A NUMBER OF EXTRMELY BRIGHT POTENTIAL LEADERS IN THE OFFING; B) A NUMBER OF THE CANDIDATES APPEAR TO BE BETTER EDUCATED AND MORE WESTERNIZED THAN THE PAST PARLIAMENT; AND C) A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER, PERHAPS A MAJORITY, OF THE CANDIDATES WILL NOT RUN UNDER PARTY LABELS. AS IN THE PAST THE REPUTATION OF THE LOCAL CANDIDATES, LOCAL ISSUES, CLAN LOYALTIES, REGIONAL AFFILIATION MAY BE OF GREATER IMPORTANCE

THAN PARTY PLATFORMS OR SPECIFIC ISSUES OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE.
THE FACT THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF WELL QUALIFIED CANDIDATES
FROM THE PUBLIC SERVICE HAVE DECIDED TO RUN DOES NOT
NECESSARILY MEAN THAT THEY WILL BE IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENT. WITH
10-20 CANDIDATES RUNNING FROM EACH ELECTORATE, A TRADITIONAL
LEADER COMMANDING CLAN LOYALTIES COULD CONCEIVABLY DEFEAT AN
EXTREMELY ARTICULATE AND WELL EDUCATED YOUNGER OPPONENT.
IT IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED THAT A NUMBER OF CANDIDATES RUNNING
UNDER PARTY LABELS WILL NOT SUPPORT THE PARTY AFTER ELECTION.
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